

The University of Western Ontario
Faculty of Arts and Humanities
Department of Modern Languages and Literatures
SPANISH / WORLD LITERATURES AND CULTURES 2951W –
Art, Literature and Revolution in Latin America: Telling the Story (Taught in English)

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Class Hours: Tuesdays, 2-4pm. **Tutorial:** Thursdays, 10-11am.

Office Hours: Thursdays, 3-4pm (N.B.: Other times available by appointment).

Course Description

As German intellectual Walter Benjamin writes in his essay “The Storyteller”, “Experience which is passed on from mouth to mouth is the source from which all storytellers have drawn.”¹ In the process of sharing experiences, more stories are born with authorship that are common while at the same time recognizing the individual opening of the hearer and the teller. In this course, we will explore storytelling as a way to understand the changes that Latin America went through during the twentieth-century: from dictatorships and revolutions to efforts for reconciliation and preservation of memory. The course content will include diverse forms of art, including poetry, mural paintings, photography, testimonies, music, and novels. *Equally important, students will be placed in bi-weekly engagement with a Latin American immigrant from the London community.* Students will maintain a portfolio to keep notes, reactions, and thoughts about their conversations, class discussions, readings, and own reflections. Based on the portfolio, students will share one story with the rest of the class at the end of the term. Revolutionary movements: we will be able to discern, survive and keep growing in a large part because of its storytelling component, the sharing of experiences from mouth to mouth.

Course Learning Outcomes

By the completion of this course, students will be able to:

- ⤴ Understand the role of the intellectual within the Latin American revolutionary movement, and the impact of the art-making process as a weapon for change.
- ⤴ Evaluate and comprehend the disjunctures attached to leaving one’s country, and the forms of art as a product of connection with one’s roots and adaptation to the new.
- ⤴ Connect with members of the London immigrant community and become allies against discrimination in the world at large.
- ⤴ Write stories of the experiences of being displaced due to war; of immigrating because of conflict; of participating in demonstrations for social, economic and political change.
- ⤴ Heighten inter-cultural competence and sensitivity towards other peoples’ cultures, traditions, and language, within and beyond circumstances of exile and immigration.

¹ Walter Benjamin, “The Storyteller,” *The Novel: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory 1900-2000*, ed. Dorothy J. Hale (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), p. 362.

Required Texts

- ♣ Carmen Aguirre, *Something Fierce: Memoirs of a Revolutionary Daughter* (Vancouver, BC: Douglas & McIntyre, 2011).
- ♣ Elena Poniatowska, *Las Soldaderas: Women of the Mexican Revolution*, trans. David Dorado Romo (El Paso: Cinco Puntos Press, 2006).
- ♣ Manuel Puig, *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, trans. Thomas Colchie (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979).

Other readings will be available through OWL.

Pedagogy

“Arts and Revolution in Latin America: Telling the Story” aims to approach the history of the Latin American region through the glass of art-making. This course will be based on the idea that storytelling was fundamental for the development of the ideas and movements that attempted to revolutionize the Latin American society. We will begin by exploring two influential texts by Cuban writer José Martí and Nicaraguan poet Rubén Darío about the how important it was for the Americas to stand united against imperialism. Then, we will move to Mexico, where art played a major role in the construction of the post-revolutionary Mexican identity. We will examine a collection of photographs put together by Mexican author Elena Poniatowska as well as manifestoes and letters by Mexican painter David Siqueiros. The journey will continue south with poetry from Central America and the Caribbean, a region where the tensions of the Cold War took a toll. We will read Guatemalan Marco Antonio Flores, Salvadorean Roque Dalton, Nicaraguan Ernesto Cardenal, Cuban Nicolás Guillén, and Puerto Rican Iván Silén. We will move to South America, where we will meet two political prisoners in Argentinean writer Manuel Puig’s novel *Kiss of the Spider Woman*. The stories will turn vividly beyond frontiers with Chilean-Canadian Carmen Aguirre’s testimony in *Something Fierce: Memoirs of a Revolutionary Daughter*. For the last lecture, we will watch the film *No* about the referendum that ended the Pinochet regime in Chile.

Community Service Learning (CSL) Component

In partnership with the London Cross Cultural Learner Centre (LCCLC), students will be placed in bi-weekly conversations with a Latin American immigrant in the London community. Students are encouraged to discuss their perspective on the class readings with their immigrant partner. Through these conversations, we aim at creating stories, telling each other experiences, and developing a connection with the community at large. Revolution, this course will demonstrate, is beyond the social, and it rather begins with the personal sharing of experiences. To keep track of the readings and the conversations outside the classroom, students will dedicate a couple of hours every week to their portfolios: a notebook where students will be free to put storytelling to task by writing about their own experiences inside and outside the class. *Portfolios will only be shared with the instructor*. In a more public forum, students will be encouraged to write two tweets every week using the Twitter hashtag #arteyrevolucion, which will be used for discussion during the weekly tutorial. The course will end with the student picking one story from their portfolios in order to celebrate with the class and the immigrant partners the sharing of experiences as a functional weapon for revolution and an expressive tool for reconciliation.

Assessment Breakdown

Portfolio..... 25%

Students will dedicate at least two hours per week to reflect their experiences inside and outside the classroom in a personal notebook. Students can decide whether they will prefer to keep a printed diary or a private blog. Portfolios' grade will be mainly based on the student's effort to examine assumptions and signs of sharing experiences through readings and conversations. Portfolios should at least include fifteen pages, and at most thirty. *Due: April 12, 2014.*

Telling the Story..... 20%

To finish the course, each student will select one experience from their portfolios in order to develop it as a story. Students' stories will be shared with the class and the CSL partners. This assignment will show the extent to which students are able to be culturally sensitive and their inter-cultural competence. Storytelling can be accompanied by other forms of art such as photography, painting, poetry, music, etc. *Due: April 8, 2013.*

Reciprocity Project..... 20%

As part of the CSL component of the course, students will develop a project to give back to the community. The project can focus on how the CSL has worked individually, ways to improve, how to continue engagement in the London community, or to extend it outside of London. As a personal reflection, it should be composed of at least 1000 words. *Due: March 27, 2014.*

Mid-term report..... 10%

On their return from Reading Week, based on their readings as well as their own conversations outside the classrooms, students will orally debrief the work in their portfolios. Each student should mention at least two stories they are working on for the final project, and will have three minutes to explain the work on progress. A hard-copy of 500 words is also required. *Due: February 27, 2014.*

Group Presentation..... 10%

Students will be divided in groups of three and select one photograph, poem, or painting, which has made a mark in their own learning of the arts in Latin America and its impact on the revolutionary movement. Each group will have ten minutes maximum to make their presentation, with five additional minutes for class discussion. *Dates: February 6 and 13, 2014.*

Participation..... 8%

With storytelling as one of its concept to explore, oral expression will be greatly encouraged as part of this course. Participation can take many forms: from class discussions and questions, to threads in the OWL forum, to also include conversations via Twitter.

Twitter..... 7%

No need to hide cell phones, tablets, and laptops! In the time when demonstrations are called through social media, it is our duty to connect and find out more about current social movements. We will use the hashtag #arteyrevolucion in Twitter. Students' tweets (at least two per week) will be used during tutorials via the Twitter Wall website <http://www.tweetbeam.com/>.

Statement on Accessibility

The University of Western Ontario is committed to recognizing the dignity and independence of all students and seeks to ensure that persons with disabilities have genuine, open and unhindered access to academic services. Students need to make an accommodation request through the official services. You may wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at (519) 661-2111 ext. 82147. For more information on Western's Policy on Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities please see:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/accommodation_disabilities.pdf

Statement on Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Mental Health

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health @ Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Readings and Schedule

Lecture, January 7. **Introduction – The Story in the Telling.**

In class readings:

- ▲ José Martí, "Our America," http://writing.upenn.edu/library/Marti_Jose_Our-America.html
- ▲ Rubén Darío, "To Roosevelt," http://public.wsu.edu/~brians/world_civ/worldcivreader/world_civ_reader_2/dario.html.

Seminar, January 9: Anne-Marie Fischer from the Student Success Centre will visit our class to give us an introduction to CSL. We will also coordinate group-making and Twitter accounts. Tweets: cultural sensitivity, inter-cultural competence, reciprocity.

Lecture, January 14. **Seizing the Instant: Photography.**

- ▲ Elena Poniatowska, *Las Soldaderas: Women of the Mexican Revolution*, trans. David Dorado Romo (El Paso: Cinco Puntos Press, 2006).

Seminar, January 16: A representative from the London Cross Cultural Learner Centre (LCCLC) will meet with the class in order to coordinate the bi-weekly conversations between students and newcomers. We will discuss Poniatowska's introductory texts and collection of photographs including pictures from [Jorge Uzón](#), [El Archivo Casasola](#), [Larry Towell](#) and [Susan Meiselas](#). Tweets: image, photography, women power.

Lecture, January 21. **Revolution in the Wall: Mexican Muralism.**

- ▲ David A. Siqueiros, "A Declaration of Social, Political and Aesthetic Principles," "Towards a Transformation of Plastic Arts," "Letter from the Front Line in Spain To Mari Teresa," "War time, War art," *Art and Revolution*, trans. Sylvia Calles (London:

Lawrence and Wishart, 1975), pp. 24-25, pp. 45-48, pp. 49-52, pp. 53-54.

Seminar, January 23: We will discuss Mexican mural paintings by visiting King's College Cardinal Carter Library, where a mural by Peruvian artist [Yim Rodriguez](#) was painted in 2010. Tweets: multiculturalism, community, conversation.

N.B.: CSL will begin by this week. Students will email the instructor with information about the newcomer and/or immigrant they will be in contact with.

Lecture, January 28. **Beating it Up: Poetry of Fight, I.**

- ▲ Marco Antonio Flores, "On Jail," "Mother," "Havana 59," trans. Robert Márquez, *Latin American Revolutionary Poetry*, ed. Robert Márquez (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974), pp. 272-287.
- ▲ Roque Dalton, "On Headaches," "OAS," "Karl Marx," "Two Greek Guerrillas: An Old Man and a Traitor," trans. Robert Márquez and Elinor Randall, *Latin American Revolutionary Poetry*, pp. 242-251.
- ▲ Ernesto Cardenal, "Psalm 48," "Psalm 36," "Psalm 5," "Zero Hour," trans. Robert Márquez and Donald Gardner, *Latin American Revolutionary Poetry*, pp. 312-363.

Seminar, January 30: We will approach poetry as a way to fight. Is poetry reflective of social and economic circumstances? Can poetry propose a plan of action? Bringing poetry from the clouds, students will create stories based on the poems. Tweets: poetry, action, revolution.

Lecture, February 4. **Beating it Up: Poetry of Fight, II.**

- ▲ Nicolás Guillén, "The Flowers Grow High," "I Have," "Angela Davis," "Sunday Reading," trans. David Arthur McMurray and Robert Márquez, *Latin American Revolutionary Poetry*, pp. 154-175.
- ▲ Iván Silén, "I sent for you," "I am going to write a poem," "I am sometimes bored," trans. Robert Márquez, *Latin American Revolutionary Poetry*, pp. 424-439.

Seminar/Group Presentations, February 6: Elaborating on painting, photography, and poetry, students in groups of three will deliver brief presentation on how art can have an impact on revolutionary movements. Tweets: Latin America, revolutionary art, social movement.

Lecture, February 11. **Making the Story: Novel, I.**

- ▲ Manuel Puig, *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, trans. Thomas Colchie (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), pp. 3-95.

Seminar/Group Presentations, February 13: Group presentations and class discussions will continue. We will also discuss Puig in regards to his incorporation of film narratives into his novel, and whether the same model can be applied in North American literature. Tweets: North America, Occupy, superhero.

Lecture, February 25. **Making the Story: Novel, II.**

- ▲ Manuel Puig, *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, pp. 96-196.

Seminar/Mid-term Reports, February 27: Students will orally debrief the work in their portfolios. Each student should mention at least two stories they are working on for the final project. Tweets: midterm, prison, dictatorship.

Due: Mid-term Reports (hard-copy).

Lecture, March 4. **Making the Story: Novel, III.**

▲ Manuel Puig, *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, pp. 197-281.

Seminar, March 6: Puig's novel will be approached from various angles: the political prisoner, the telling of films, the conversations in prison, the conversion to political activist. Tweets: film, torture, activism.

Lecture, March 11. **Living the Revolution: Testimony, I.**

▲ Carmen Aguirre, *Something Fierce: Memoirs of a Revolutionary Daughter* (Vancouver, BC: Douglas & McIntyre, 2011), pp. 1-86.

Seminar, March 13: Students will have the opportunity to talk about Aguirre childhood, and the role of her parents as political activist. Tweets: children, stories, testimony.

Lecture, March 18. **Living the Revolution: Testimony, II.**

▲ Carmen Aguirre, *Something Fierce: Memoirs of a Revolutionary Daughter*, pp. 87-169.

Seminar, March 20: As Aguirre becomes an activist herself, was there things she missed? Students will be encouraged to discuss whether certain things have priority over other. Tweets: life, growing, teen.

Lecture, March 25. **Living the Revolution: Testimony, III.**

▲ Carmen Aguirre, *Something Fierce: Memoirs of a Revolutionary Daughter*, pp. 171-274.

Seminar, March 27: As Aguirre becomes a member of North American society while still in connection with her Latin American roots, students will discuss the connection North-South. Tweets: Americas, culture, society.

Due: Reciprocity Project.

Lecture, April 1. **Revolutionizing the View: Film.**

No. Dir. Pablo Larraín. Fabula. 2012.

Seminar, April 3: Diversity comes together with an aim in common: to bring democracy and end dictatorship. What are the steps in between to achieve the goal of freedom? What role does art play in the fight? Does storytelling participate as an active element? Tweets: goal, ads, freedom.

Lecture, April 8. **Celebration: Telling the Story.**

The time has come to share experiences, to tell each other stories, to celebrate together! Students will read their stories and CSL partners will be invited to attend. As an opportunity for multiculturalism and revolutionary transformations, this event will close the course in the path to continue working together, and to let the stories propagate from mouth to mouth.

Due: Portfolios – April 12, during the afternoon in UC 359.

Bibliography

Aguirre, Carmen. *Something Fierce: Memoirs of a Revolutionary Daughter*. Vancouver, BC: Douglas & McIntyre, 2011.

Archivo Casasola. Web.

<http://www.unilat.org/VirtualeMuseum/Datas/Expositions/casasola/Etudes/indexEs.htm>

Darío, Rubén. "To Roosevelt." Web.

http://public.wsu.edu/~brians/world_civ/worldcivreader/world_civ_reader_2/dario.html.

Márquez, Robert, ed. *Latin American Revolutionary Poetry = Poesía revolucionaria latinoamericana. A Bilingual Anthology*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974.

Martí, José. "Our America." Web. http://writing.upenn.edu/library/Marti_Jose_Our-America.html

Meiselas, Susan. Web. http://www.magnumphotos.com/C.aspx?VP3=CMS3&VF=MAGO31_10_VForm&ERID=24KL535EQH

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Poniatowska, Elena. *Las Soldaderas: Women of the Mexican Revolution*. Trad. David Dorado Romo. El Paso: Cinco Puntos Press, 2006.

Puig, Manuel. *Kiss of the Spider Woman*. Trad. Thomas Colchie. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979.

Siqueiros, David Alfaro. *Art and Revolution*. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1975.